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TAGS: PHUM PGOV KTIP NI

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS UPDATE

REF: A. LAGOS 430

¶B. ABUJA 1950

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Poloff attended the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking In Persons (NAPTIP) 13th National Stakeholder's Consultative Forum in Abuja on October 30. Representatives from various civil society organizations; the Nigeria Police Force; Nigerian Customs; Nigeria Immigration Service; UNODC; and diplomatic representatives from Switzerland, France, and Italy attended to present updates on progress made during the period of May - September 2008. NAPTIP Director of Investigations, and second in command, Muhammad Babandede, informed stakeholders about a Joint Benin/Nigerian Consultative Forum November 2-6 in Lagos, where representatives from Nigeria, Benin Republic, Congo, Gabon, and Togo presented country progress reports on their respective fights against Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and developed a collaborative way forward. NAPTIP Executive Secretary Carol Ndaguwa announced that on August 20, the Federal Executive Council (FEC) approved the National Plan of Action (NPA) for TIP, which was initially drafted in 2006. On November 12, after only a few months of review, the FEC also approved the National Policy on Protection and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking, which focuses more on strategies to rehabilitate victims and protect them from retribution, whereas the NPA is a broad framework that covers prevention, prosecution, and public awareness. The recent passage of these policies leads some to believe the federal government is ready to take TIP issues seriously, while it may also be due to the upcoming UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR). END SUMMARY.

STAKEHOLDER UPDATES

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¶2. (U) NAPTIP: During NAPTIP's 13th Stakeholder's Consultative Forum in Abuja on October 30, Director of Investigations Muhammad Babandede, reported that NAPTIP rescued 109 victims, while the NIS rescued 141, between May and September. Babandede added that NAPTIP successfully convicted 20 traffickers during the same period and indicated that there were currently 66 cases still pending. Babandede highlighted that of the 457 total victims rescued by all agencies (including NPF and Civil Defense) from May to September, the highest concentration were from Edo State. Babandede stressed that Benin City still produces the highest

number of trafficking victims in Nigeria.

**¶3. (U) NIGERIA IMMIGRATION SERVICE:** A representative from NIS reported that on September 10, a young Nigerian girl was rescued at the Abuja International Airport and was being rehabilitated at a shelter run by the NGO Women Trafficking & Child Labor Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF). NIS also shared details about the September 14 rescue of 22 victims and arrest of one suspect in Sokoto. The victims and suspect were all handed over to NAPTIP for rehabilitation and investigation.

**¶4. (U) NIGERIA POLICE FORCE:** Saluna Mutuah, Deputy Director of the Anti-TIP Unit at the NPF headquarters in Abuja reported that the unit had trained 400 officers on the handling of TIP cases.

**¶5. (U) WOTCLEF:** Women Trafficking & Child Labor Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) National Coordinator Veronica Umaru informed stakeholders that WOTCLEF provided skills training for 185 at-risk girls in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in their choice of hairdressing, tailoring, or catering. According to Umaru, WOTCLEF also continued to do awareness outreach by visiting churches to educate mothers about the dangers of trafficking. Umaru added that WOTCLEF was working with the American Bar Association to translate the Child Rights Act into the Hausa and Yoruba languages, in hopes of encouraging better understanding and passage of the Act in the states that have yet to ratify the law. (Note: Out of 36 states, only 20 plus the Federal Capital Territory have ratified the Act. End Note)

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**¶6. (U) NIGER STATE:** A representative of the Niger State Commissioner for Women's Affairs said that the state government increased funding to address the issue of the "almajiri" children with the integration of Koranic studies into general education. (Note: In Northern Nigeria, there are an estimated 2 million almajiri, or children whose parents sent them to live and study with an Islamic teacher. Instead of receiving shelter and an education, the children are forced to beg for money that is turned over to their "teachers" and they end up living on the streets. End Note.) The Niger State representative noted that the Commission was still actively pressing for passage of the Child Rights Act in the state legislature.

**¶7. (U) EBONYI STATE:** A representative from the Ebonyi State Ministry of Women's Affairs reported on the state's public education efforts, such as jingles aired on the local radio warning people about the dangers of trafficking and a billboard posted in a strategic location. She added however, that although the state working group was not functional, the Civil Defense Corps showed willingness to cooperate. (Note: According to NAPTIP, 22 states have established anti-TIP working groups that include members of local government, NGOs, and law enforcement agencies. These groups are supposed to meet monthly and collaborate on anti-TIP efforts.

In a majority of states, however, participation has waned over the past year. End Note.)

**¶8. (U) ENUGU STATE:** A representative for the Commissioner of Gender Affairs reported on the state's work to streamline the adoption process in an effort to stop illegal adoptions through "baby farms" and maternity homes (ref A). Similar to Ebonyi State, the representative reported that the anti-TIP state working group was not holding meetings.

FEC APPROVES NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

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**¶9. (C)** During the Stakeholder's forum, NAPTIP Executive Secretary Carol Ndaguba, announced that on August 20 the Federal Executive Council (FEC) approved the National Plan of Action (NPA) for Trafficking In Persons which was initially presented to the FEC in 2006 by former President Obasanjo,

but never approved. Ndaguba stressed the importance of stakeholders actively participating in the implementation of the NPA now that it had been approved. During a meeting on November 13, Babandede informed Poloff that on November 12, the FEC also approved the National Policy on Protection and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking after only a few months of review. The Policy on Protection and Assistance to Victims focuses more on strategies to rehabilitate victims and protect them from retribution, whereas the NPA is a broad framework that covers prevention, prosecution, and public awareness to combat TIP. According to Babandede, the FEC's rapid approval of the Victim's Assistance policy, in conjunction with the long awaited approval of the NPA on TIP, demonstrated that the federal government was finally taking TIP seriously. (Comment: The GON has made a lot of movement on human rights issues in the past few months. November 20, the FEC also approved the legal framework for a bill to prohibit discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS and on November 26 the House of Representatives will conduct a public hearing on the People With Disabilities Bill. Despite passage of such policies, there are no implementation strategies in place, without which there will be minimal progress. The Child Rights Act for instance was approved in 2003 and the federal government has yet to make any significant progress in combating child labor. End Comment.)

#### NAPTIP CELEBRATES ITS 5TH ANNIVERSARY

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**¶10.** (U) To celebrate its 5th Anniversary, NAPTIP organized the first National Awareness Week July 30 through August 8 (ref B). The theme for the week was "Kick Out Modern Slavery" (KOMS) and included activities such as a press conference, charity walk, Presidential Launch of the Red Card to Trafficking, Benefit Dinner, and Launch of Victims Trust Fund, which was established to assist victims with rehabilitation. At the stakeholder's meeting, Babandede

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announced that the Victims Trust Fund raised 1.5 million naira (\$13,000) during the awareness week thanks to donations from the Dutch Embassy, Afribank, Oceanic, Access, 7UP, UNODC/UN GIFT, and UNICEF. (Note: In addition to donations, the fund will also benefit from the sale of confiscated properties and seized assets of convicted traffickers. End Note.) Babandede added that the Red Card is a tool that was used successfully by ILO in other countries to combat child labor, and NAPTIP hopes its implementation in Nigeria will assist in the fight against TIP as well. Over one million of the informational cards were distributed throughout the country as part of Phase I. Phase II involves the state and local governments to replicate the effort for a more grassroots approach.

#### V-SAT & SOLAR POWER AT THE MONITORING CENTER

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**¶11.** (U) On September 4, NAPTIP, in association with the American Bar Association - Rule of Law Initiative (ABA-ROLI), commissioned a TIP database, V-SAT (satellite), and solar power project (ref B). The main database at NAPTIP headquarters is linked by the V-SAT to all six NAPTIP zonal offices as well as NPF and NIS offices. The main server is solar powered, providing 24-hour access and operational capacity despite frequent power outages. Stakeholders from the NAPTIP zonal offices reported that they received training on how to utilize the new database. The NPF, however, said that their TIP unit office in Abuja was still waiting for the installation of necessary software.

#### INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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**¶12.** (U) After NAPTIP's participation in Operation Koolvis resulted in the arrest of 60 Nigerian traffickers (ref B), NAPTIP continued working with law enforcement officials from the Netherlands, France, Norway, Italy, Sweden, Ghana and the UK. On November 2, NAPTIP officials in collaboration with the Benin Republic organized a four day Consultative Forum on

TIP in Lagos. Representatives from Congo, Gabon, and Togo also attended the event and presented country progress reports on TIP within their respective countries. One session, led by Babandede, addressed ways for all five countries to collaborate on investigations and TIP issues. The workshop culminated in two plans of action: the 2009 Benin/Nigeria Joint Plan of Action and the 2009 Zakpota/Abeokuta Plan of Action to address the trafficking of children across the borders between Nigeria and the Benin Republic.

#### CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES

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¶13. (U) Babandede stated that the main obstacle NAPTIP still faced was limited finances for investigations, public education programs, and victim care and support. Babandede added that minimal commitment from State and Local Government as well as the slow pace of the judicial system also exacerbated the situation. According to Babandede, the fine line between smuggling and trafficking further complicated matters since smuggling of migrants had yet to be criminalized. Stakeholders all agreed that the GON's domestication of the UN Convention on the Smuggling of Migrants was a priority due to the increasing number of boys being smuggled to Europe under the guise of a football (soccer) career.

¶14. (C) COMMENT: While welcome, the large turnout at these stakeholder meetings does not yet amount to increased collaboration. State level commitment is low, suggesting the need for more grassroots programming. Until that time, relying on the local governments to push initiatives such as the new Red Card, will not likely cause significant change. NAPTIP, however, continues to make strong efforts, despite lack of funding and resources, to prosecute more traffickers and sensitize the public to TIP. The fact that they can draw so many interested parties to these forums is a testament to the work they are doing. If, however, these meetings occurred more than twice a year, they might actually help create a more cohesive working group. END COMMENT.

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¶15. (C) COMMENT CON'T: The GON appears to be making a concerted effort to address human rights issues. These efforts, however, are likely in preparation for Nigeria's forthcoming Universal Periodic Review before the UN Human Rights Council. The true test will be whether the GON can implement the policies, and if they continue to address the issues after the UPR. END COMMENT.

¶16. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.  
Sanders